Selected Abstracts from Other OeNB Publications

The selected abstracts below alert readers to studies on CESEE topics in other OeNB publications. Please see *www.oenb.at* for the full-length versions of these studies.

Foreign Currency Lending in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe: the Case of Austrian Banks

Johannes Pann,
Reinhardt Seliger,
Julia Übeleis

This paper describes the exposure of Austrian banks to foreign currency loans in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe and the CIS and elaborates on its risks to banking sector stability. Austrian banks' foreign currency loan exposure more than doubled between 2005 and 2009, their regional subsidiaries' foreign currency loan exposure continued to be higher than the market average in this period. Our findings confirm the key importance of funding risks and do not contradict the assumption of a nonlinear relationship with regard to credit risk. However, a simple comparison of risk indicators does not unambiguously indicate an overall higher credit risk in the foreign currency loan portfolio. Most recent data suggest that Austrian banks' foreign currency loan exposure is declining. Policymakers are now called upon to use the momentum and strike a balance between restricting foreign currency lending to foster a more sustainable growth path and avoiding negative procyclical effects.

To be published in *Financial Stability Report 20.*

Russian Banks on the Route of Fragile Recovery

Stephan Barisitz,
Mathias Lahnsteiner

Largely thanks to the recovery of the real economy, the situation of Russian banks has improved again. After month-on-month loan growth had quickly ground to a halt in late 2008, banks contributed to Russia's deep economic slump in 2009. The share of nonperforming loans had tripled to 10% of total loans by late 2009 and has since remained at about this level. An incipient recovery of lending made itself felt only in the second quarter of 2010. However, as the national authorities had delivered a comprehensive policy response which helped sustain or reestablish confidence, Russia did not experience any major bank run or failure. Temporary deposit withdrawals after the collapse of Lehman Brothers were followed by a rapid expansion of deposits, starting from early 2009. Following a modest crisis-triggered rise, the share of foreign currency loans declined again to about one-fifth of total loans. Banks' access to international capital markets improved from late 2009/early 2010. Profitability, having plunged to zero in mid-2009, subsequently recovered but is still modest. Thanks to recapitalization exercises, capital adequacy is satisfactory. The stabilization of the banking sector has allowed the authorities to start exiting from crisis response measures. Banks are faced with a vulnerable environment given the world economy's post-crisis fragility and Russia's undiminished dependence on the oil price and capital flows, which is exacerbated by persisting structural weaknesses. Nonetheless, the existing shock-absorbing factors are sizeable.

To be published in *Financial Stability Report 20.*